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TAGS: [PARM](#) [MNUC](#) [MARR](#) [PREL](#) [PTER](#) [FR](#)
SUBJECT: MOD BACKGROUND COMMENTS ON FRANCE'S EVOLVING
NUCLEAR DETERRENCE DOCTRINE

REF: PARIS 406

Classified By: POLITICAL MINISTER-COUNSELOR JOSIAH ROSENBLATT, REASON 1
.4 B/D

¶1. (C) Summary: MOD Diplomatic advisor Camille Grand reiterated Feb 8 that President Chirac had not sought to break significant new ground on France's nuclear deterrence strategy in his January 19 speech, but rather was adapting French deterrence policy to the evolving "strategic environment." France's nuclear deterrence was designed to protect national territory, population, and vital interests, including strategic supplies; the new element was the inclusion of state sponsors of terrorism as potential threats. Grand confirmed that France's policy had not been coordinated with others in Europe; instead, decisions on nuclear policy and its use rested exclusively with President Chirac. France, nonetheless, did not wish to exclude from protection potential allies and friends "not currently in NATO or the EU." End Summary.

¶2. (C) On February 8, MOD Deputy Diplomatic Advisor Camille Grand expanded on President Chirac's January 19 speech on France's nuclear doctrine, in which the President confirmed that the focus of French policy was on deterrence, including against state-sponsored terrorist threats (reftel). Grand observed that Chirac had not enunciated a new deterrence strategy, but rather had further refined its role in protecting "strategic supplies," as well as "national territory, population and interests." The speech was an effort to adapt France's nuclear strategy to the "evolving strategic environment," while leaving the details deliberately ambiguous.

¶3. (C) Grand emphasized that, in principle, the French have not excluded the possibility of a strategic attack, although in practice they see no such threat on the horizon. The speech, however, was designed to introduce the notion of a calibrated response, hence the revelation that some missiles have a reduced number of warheads, the first time France has publicly discussed this fact. France did not wish to face the "all-or-nothing option" in deciding on a response to an attack, he added.

¶4. (C) In terms of the target audience, Grand said the speech had been long in preparation and was not intended for an Iranian audience specifically, although it was designed to send a message to states sponsoring terrorism, "such as North Korea and Iran." Grand also observed that some in the press had misunderstood the distinction between dealing with

"fanatical terrorists" and states sponsoring terrorism. As Chirac had stated in both the 2001 and in the January 19 speeches, France does not believe nuclear weapons deter "fanatical terrorists," acting independently, but could deter states prepared to use or support use of WMD. France reserved the option to deal with states that threatened France's national interests via terrorist means or by sponsoring terrorist attacks. Additionally, he added that the French reaction would be determined not by the nature or type of attack, but by the consequences of such an attack on French interests. (Note: In the speech, Chirac talked about targetting the "centers of political, military, and economic power." End Note.) The bottom line is that France does not want to be caught off guard in dealing with "regional powers with nuclear weapons."

15. (C) In response to polmiloff's queries, Grand said Chirac's reference to France's nuclear shield for other European countries or allies had been left deliberately vague so as not to exclude a priori any one country and to create doubt among potential enemies. Specifically, France did not want to exclude coverage for potential allies or friends who might not be in NATO or the EU, he added. In terms of NATO, Grand said France remained outside the Nuclear Planning Group and did not foresee any reintegration at present. He admitted that France's nuclear deterrence policy was now closer to that of the United States, although with some notable differences: France has ruled out tactical military nukes and is not doing any research on "mini-nukes." However, both the U.S. and France are comfortable possessing nukes, he concluded.

16. (C) In the context of our discussion, Grand revealed that nuclear policy and decisions over the use of France's nukes

were the exclusive purview of President Chirac. There had been no interagency process, although several ministries commented on the final product. At the Elysee palace, the principal drafter was Chirac's Military Advisor, General Jean-Louis Georgelin, whose position was established back in the 1950s to provide advice on military and nuclear matters.

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